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OBSERVATIONS
ON THE
SCARLATINA ANGINOSA,
COMMONLY CALLED

The Ulcerated Sore Throat.

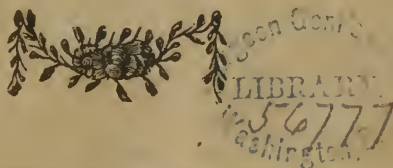
By JAMES SIMS, M. D.

President of the Medical Society in LONDON.

With some REMARKS

BY

THOMAS BULFINCH, M. D.



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1796.

REPORT OF THE

COMMISSIONERS

OF THE LAND OFFICE

FOR THE YEAR 1881

IN RESPONSE TO A RESOLUTION

PASSED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ON FEBRUARY 2, 1881

AND BY THE SENATE

ON FEBRUARY 10, 1881

AND BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ON FEBRUARY 10, 1881

OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

Scarlatina Anginosa, or Sore Throat.

HAVING, when in London, experienced great benefit from the use of the troches of nitre, in a fore-throat, I determined, whenever an opportunity should offer, to push the trial of it to its greatest extent. And judging that its benefit arose from the simple nitre, it was my intention to use it as simply as possible. Soon after my return to America, I had an opportunity of ascertaining the efficacy of nitre by a fair experiment. A lady, who had for a number of years been so unhappy as to labour under a violent inflammation of the tonsil glands, which had always suppurated and broke, requested my assistance. My visits at first were without success. The inflammation came on with such rapidity, that it was not easy to check it. At length, however, I had the happiness of obtaining my wishes ; for remonstrating to her that timidity defeated my prescriptions, she promised to follow them implicitly in future.

I then gave her three or four drachms of nitre, powdered very fine, and coloured with a few grains of cinnabar, directing her to lay the half, or indeed a whole teaspoonful on her tongue, to let it dissolve gradually, and to repeat it every two or three hours. She complied ; the consequence was, a most copious flow of saliva ; which, by abating the inflammation, not only terminated her distress at the time, but entirely freed her from the disorder. According to her own
information,

information, thirty years have already elapsed without its return.

Pleased with my success on this fair trial, I have continued the use of the powder in many instances, and to very great advantage ; particularly in the case of Mrs. W * * * *. This lady had, I may say, been tormented with the like disorder for three or four winters successively ; but using the nitre, as before directed, she has been so far relieved, as not to have had any return of it, for the last nine years. I could enumerate other instances of like success ; but the persons already mentioned being still living, they can sufficiently testify to the circumstances as related. Happy in the success of these trials, I have often wished for an opportunity of making the communication. I have been deterred, however, by the simplicity of the prescription. Nor should I have ventured, at this time, to offer my sentiments to the publick, if I had not been emboldened by a somewhat similar communication of the much celebrated Dr. James Sims, president of the Medical Society in London, on the scarlatina anginosa. This valuable paper is in the thirty-second article of the first vol. of the memoirs of the Medical Society of London.

“ Without attempting to propose any conjectures on this head,” says the doctor, (viz. on some peculiar symptoms just related), “ I shall proceed to describe the method of cure of the first species of fever already described, and which I call the scarlatina anginosa,” (or in this country called the fore-throat distemper), “ premising, that but two persons died out of above two hundred, in whom it was used ; both of which cases shall be mentioned hereafter.”

“ I had

“ I had been myself every winter, for many years, liable to one or more attacks of the inflammatory angina, for which I had used many methods of cure in vain, the disorder running its regular course in spite of all my efforts ; and to shew that these were not feeble ones, I shall only mention, that I once had about forty ounces of blood taken from my arm in the space of eight hours, without its seeming in the least to shorten the complaint. At last, about ten years ago, I resolved to try what the vitriolic acid would do in the case : I therefore, on the next attack, sent for two ounces of the oil of vitriol, and mixing part of it with water, I made as strong a gargle as my throat would possibly bear ; I continued five hours incessantly gargling with this, until I had used many quarts of water, and also the greatest part of the acid. That I might give the gargle the greater efficacy, I from time to time, swallowed as much of it as I found my stomach would receive. The design I had of swallowing part of it, was my reason for choosing this acid, as I knew the stomach would bear a much greater quantity of it, than any other astringent we are acquainted with, and believe we cannot apply a gargle sufficiently to the diseased part, without letting some of it pass into the œsophagus. So intent was I in prosecuting my scheme, that I believe I would have persisted until I had used the whole of the acid, had I not been constrained to leave off by excessive faintness and fatigue. When I had done, the inflammation had entirely subsided, and my throat felt quite parched and shrivelled. From that time, I have not been once attacked by the disease. My success in this case led me to prescribe the same acid in *all* other cases

cases of angina, where I was consulted ; nor have I had, as yet, reason to repent its exhibition.

“ In this course of practice, however, I soon came to rely more upon its inward exhibition than upon its use as a gargle. In the present epidemic, therefore, I naturally had recourse to a remedy so often tried, and found successful ; my common prescription was two ounces of tincture of roses, a drachm of syrup of lemons, and spirit of vitriol twenty drops, or as much as could be added to the tincture without making it too highly acid for the particular patient it was prescribed for. This draught was ordered to be taken by an adult every hour and half, or every hour, and even oftener, according to the exigence of the case ; and even children, from two to three years old, have swallowed much above two hundred drops of the acid in twenty-four hours.

“ As I had always seen the greatest advantage in putrid or malignant diseases from the use of gentle laxatives, and have ever found rhubarb most consonant to the bowels of a Londoner, I began, in the very first instance, with ordering it ; my common prescription consisted of equal parts of rhubarb and salpolychrest, of which mixture as much was taken as procured about two motions a day. Having already said that the patients in this disease were not at all inclinable to costiveness, the exhibition of laxatives may seem to some unnecessary ; but I must remark, that in most putrid fevers the case is the same, yet their use seems ever attended with singular advantage ; and besides, there was frequently a nausea and considerable vomiting attending the beginning of the disease we are now treating of.

“ I should

“ I should perhaps have mentioned first, that wherever this nausea took place, I always ordered a gentle emetic of ipecacuana wine to be taken instantly, which ever gave considerable relief ; this remedy, however, was scarcely ever given but in that particular circumstance, and therefore cannot be enumerated among those commonly used, as it was but a few cases to which I was called in time to prescribe it.

“ Upon the above-recited draughts and powders, I soon found reason to have such complete reliance, that in many cases I never once varied them ; and even where I did make an alteration in them, it was such as contained their most efficacious parts. Thus, as the disease proceeded, I sometimes ordered a strong decoction of the bark to be substituted for the tincture of roses ; and to this, if the pulse were very weak, I added some cordial confection, and stomachic tincture, still, however, retaining as much of the spirit of vitriol as I thought convenient, and persisting in the use of the eccoprotic powder.

“ During this whole course, I ordered the patient to eat moderately of any food that the stomach seemed to relish, not excepting broth or flesh, and to drink a little wine, mixed with water, if they felt at all low ; or porter or ale, if they seemed more agreeable to their palate, which was often the case. I have said a *little* wine, because a large proportion of the sufferers being very young, did not seem to require any ; and I have frequently observed, in putrid cases, a large quantity of wine do great mischief, where half a pint would have been highly serviceable. In all these cases, we should ever keep in mind that our intention in ordering it, should be to raise the strength, and that nothing debilitates

debilitates so much, as too large a quantity of it, which is extremely visible in a person who is intoxicated.

“ Having proceeded in this manner during the rise and height of the disease, I found it necessary to change my plan, as soon as the height was passed. This was a point of the treatment as needful to be known, and exactly attended to, as any other in the malady ; for as soon as the pulse, about the sixth day, began to fall to the natural standard, if the cordial medicines and regimen were persisted in, or increased with a view to keep up the sinking pulse, many vexatious or even dangerous consequences ensued ; a new fever, often more violent than the first, was raised, a great swelling and inflammation of the tonsils or parotids, with acute pain, came on, and the scarlet eruption reappeared as copiously as before. In adapting ourselves to this change, seemed one of the niceties in the treatment of the disorder ; but as the change of appearances have been already pointed out, I shall not recapitulate it. Suffice it to say, that as soon as the change began, I always subtracted somewhat from the wine and cordials, and quickly prohibited them entirely, diminishing, at the same time, the spirit of vitriol, which seemed now unnecessary, and giving the rhubarb in smaller quantity, and relying, during the period of amendment, upon gentle, nourishing diet and broths, as the only medicines, except where some particular symptom seemed to require attention. I have as yet said nothing of gargles, liniments and blisters ; the truth is, I place very little confidence in them ; not but that I have tried them repeatedly. At first, I always ordered a gargle to be used of tincture of roses, with some spirit of vitriol, or acid of sea-salt.

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I afterwards tried a solution of alum, vinegar, and other astringents ; I have likewise ordered milder ones, as sage or balm tea, or barley water ; but cannot say that I have found much benefit from any of them : On the contrary, when there were many ulcers and sloughs in the throat, I think I have seen them of disservice, if much used. The only gargle that I think I have seen any service from, is brandy, with a little water, or frequently without any mixture whatever ; but even this could be used in general only seldom ; a very frequent use of it, or any wash, or indeed any constant exercise of the parts, as in expectoration, seeming to be prejudicial. As to the fumes of hot liquids, drawn in with the breath, I can say little, having only in two cases ordered the vapour of vinegar and water to be used, with no apparent benefit ; though I have prescribed it, with great advantage, in other cases of quincy affecting the breathing.

“ Of bleeding, much need not be said.

“ Strong purgatives seemed at least as objectionable as bleeding.

“ The same may be said of sudorifics ; for though a gentle perspiration did good, and usually attended the turn of the disease, yet great sweats were almost ever pernicious.

“ With respect to exposure to air, I found this disorder, when the efflorescence was considerable, to agree perfectly with the measles, it being absolutely requisite to confine the patient to his bed, and to keep the room moderately warm with fire. In this case, the drink was allowed to be a little warmed, which I found was most pleasing to the patient's palate ; but when the efflorescence was less, the precautions were unnecessary, nor were they desired by the patient. It

is to be understood from hence, that the exposure to cool air did not seem at all to depend on the state of the angina; for where there was little of the scarlet eruption, and the patients were low, I have found them evidently relieved by taking them out of bed, and having the air of the room cooled. A strict attention to the passions and affections of the mind was exceedingly requisite in all, but particularly in those beyond the age of puberty.

“ After giving this account of the method pursued most successfully in this disease, I shall now mention the only instances in which I knew it to fail. The first case of a young lady, about sixteen years of age, who was so obstinate, that from the very first, she would scarcely ever obey any one direction given her; nay, she carried this so far as to boast to her school-fellows, that she would not. She had address and cunning enough to secrete most of her medicines, and to persuade her attendants, that she had taken them; and on the fifth day, fell a victim to her own mistaken opinion, rather than the insufficiency of the method.”

The other instance is omitted, on account of its length; though it tends greatly to shew a candid acknowledgement of an error in the doctor; for he says, “ From this case I was more firmly persuaded of a maxim, which my whole former practice had served to inculcate, that it is exceedingly dangerous in an epidemic to deviate in any measure from a practice which has been found successful. A physician, it is true, should be attentive to every, the most minute circumstance; but this attention should be of the speculative, not active kind, until some instance of bad success shews that his former mode requires a change; in which
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case, the attention he has bestowed will furnish him with that change without the hazard of repeated trials.

“ There was one symptom which I saw, in several cases, follow the crisis of this disease, and which deserves to be particularly noticed. This was a most inconceivable degree of languor, which attacked the patient in an instant, when all disorder seemed almost gone ; it was without pain or uneasiness ; nay, I may say, without dejection of spirits ; for although I have known some take a solemn leave of their families, yet it was with the utmost tranquillity ; and on being assured by me, on my arrival, that it was unattended with danger, they have continued for several hours, whilst it lasted, conversing with those about them in the most placid, cheerful manner.

“ A watchmaker gave me the best description of this, by telling me that he felt as if all his inward works were going instantly to stop, his main spring of life being entirely run down. I am inclinable to think, that this feeling is connected with the angina, from having myself suffered it after one of the attacks of that disorder, which for many years I was subject to. As there were no other symptoms but the mere languor, I found proper encouragement given to the patients themselves—and some gentle cordials prescribed, in order to satisfy them, and the by-standers, who were more alarmed than the sufferer, together with a little TIME, a medicine that cures oftener than we are willing to acknowledge, always got the better of it.”

Having selected some of the most material observations of the doctor, I now take the liberty to relate the trials made in confirmation of them. Although it is well known that the world is greatly indebted to the
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late celebrated Fothergill, Huxam, and others, for their very valuable publications, yet no one has written so fully and decidedly as Dr. Sims on this subject, who goes so far as to say, that in two instances only, out of two hundred, he has failed of success, and one of those merely by her own imprudence. Led, therefore, to the trial recommended by him, I have the happiness to say, that his method has answered my most sanguine hopes and expectations, having never failed me of success in any one instance, but encouraged me to recommend it, with only a few deviations. To make those clear, I will relate them in their order. When called upon early, on the first attack of the disorder, if nausea and foulness of stomach and bowels indicated, I have endeavoured to cleanse them by a gentle emetic and cathartic, calculated for those purposes ; but have of late found them frequently unnecessary previous to the exhibition of the medicine, observing that by its delay more hurt than good has been done by them. I have, therefore, of late, gone immediately on the use of the medicine in the following manner. Instead of administering the medicine in the doctor's way, by giving it in draughts, as is the custom in London, I have dropped from one hundred to two hundred drops of * oil or spirit of vitriol into an eight ounce vial, nearly full of simple water, with the addition of sixty or eighty drops of compound spirits of lavender, directing from a teaspoonful to a common table spoonful to be given every two or three hours, according to the age of the patient, and urgency of the symptoms. In some cases, where the foulness of the tongue and fauces seemed to require it, I have recommended some powdered nitre to be occasionally

* Nurses should be cautious not to drop any of the medicine on the clothes or linen of the sick.

occasionally laid on the tongue, which has caused a plentiful discharge of saliva, and greatly cleansed them. But this, from its disagreeableness, cannot be used but by adults. I have carefully endeavoured to keep the stomach and bowels clean by repeated doses of rhubarb and salt of wormwood, neutralized by some of the vitriolic mixture ; or given castor oil or brimstone and molasses to children, which has answered with them very well ; occasionally giving an anodyne at night.

About the fifth or sixth day, I have generally found a disinclination to the vitriolic medicine, and have then either abated its strength, or given it with either one or two teaspoonfuls of the tincture, or two large table spoonfuls of the decoction of the bark ; and by this means have got down more than I could have done singly. At times I have found a stricture brought on the lungs by the acid when given freely ; but by thus giving it with the bark, or giving a dose of elixir asthmatic occasionally, it has soon been removed. After giving the acid regularly to the sixth day, I have not been solicitous for its continuance, provided I could prevail on the patients to take the bark freely, and to support their strength by wine and suitable nourishment. Where any external tumor of the throat takes place, by applying an embrocation of oil and sal volatile, it has soon subsided. During my whole practice, I have never had occasion to bleed, blister, or give any other cathartic than what is mentioned above, nor had occasion to fatigue my patients with gargles of any kind whatever. At certain times, however, one or more of these methods may probably be required ; but as I have generally been applied to in the access or infancy of the disorder, these assistances have not been wanted.

Happy

Happy should I have been to communicate these observations sooner ; but deeming myself not entitled to recommend, though from the best authority, what I had not sufficiently tried, I have been deterred from doing it ; but now thinking myself fully justified, from the trial of the medicine, can with pleasure, satisfaction, and confidence, recommend it to the publick.

I should not have thought it necessary to add any more on the subject, had not a circumstance taken place, which not only tends to recommend, but also, at times, to discontinue the use of the vitriolic medicine, by shewing its nature and effect ; and being uncommon, deserves to be particularly noticed. Being desired to visit a girl of twelve years of age, in Mr. V * * * * 's family, on Saturday evening, the 2d instant, to whom, having had, among others, some slight complaint in her throat, for several days, I gave a febrifuge powder ; and informed the family, that I feared a fever of a bad kind would ensue. On the next day, finding her wandering and desipient, I gave her an emetic, which operated kindly ; but on the day following, finding a general efflorescence, with some considerable degree of sore throat, I put her on the liberal use of the vitriolic mixture. On the next day, a laxity of bowels coming on, I gave her a dose of rhubarb and salt of wormwood, neutralized with some of the same mixture, which acted kindly, and checked the discharges ; and by continuing the mixture, she amended daily, complaining only of weakness and tenderness of her body, particularly in her legs and feet. So far relieved was she, that I am confident, she would soon have regained her health, had not an unhappy accident taken place to prevent it, for on visiting her on the evening

evening of Thursday, the sixth day of her disorder, I found the large front door of the house open, and the wind, which was very cold and disagreeable, passing up the staircase, and the door of the child's chamber being also open, the cold air was thus permitted to rush upon her, as she lay asleep, with her face opposite to the door. From this, I feared and foretold some difficulty would arise; and so it happened; for from that time she complained of the increased soreness of her limbs and difficulty of breathing. Being loath wholly to discontinue the mixture, I gave it in less quantity, and interposed some febrifuge powders, hoping thereby to answer both intentions; but on visiting her the next morning, I was informed by her mother, that a cough (which was a new complaint) had kept her from sleeping all the night; however, as she was then asleep, I left her, with directions to continue the powders, which had a good effect on her bowels, though they did not relieve her breathing. Judging, therefore, that this complaint might be spasmodic, I left, in the evening, an anodyne draught, with directions when to give it; but before it was given, I was again called, and finding her complaints greatly increased, with a small, quick and contracted pulse, I bled her to about four ounces, which she bore well; after which, she took her anodyne, and had a good night.

On examining the blood, the next morning, with Mr. V****, it appeared so extremely tenacious and fizy, that though pressed with the point of a small knife several times, it did not yield in the least to the impression.

Is not then the effect of the vitriolic mixture very apparent, by restoring the crisis of the blood, in a few days, from a loose, dissolved, putrescent state, to such
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an one as to be liable, by the slightest accident, to induce inflammation ?

Is it not evident, that a new fever was hereby generated, foreign to the original disorder ? And is it not from hence adviseable to recommend a trial of the state of the blood, by drawing an ounce or two, into a small cup, on the seventh or eighth day of the disease, or whenever such a stricture is complained of, whereby the further use or disuse of the medicine may be happily determined ?

As the doctor observes, that the “ disease was totally at a stand during some days of sharp frost that happened, but recovered new vigour soon after that was over,” does it not seem probable, that if the cold, in the instance before mentioned, had been applied sooner, it would have had a tendency rather to expedite than protract the cure ? He farther says, “ I never saw any danger attend the disorder, except where there were *ulcers* of the throat.” This shews the propriety of using the medicine early in the disease, to prevent their formation.

Having now related what I had to offer on this subject, I shall only add, with the doctor, “ that having written in the hours of leisure taken from business, I hope I may be excused the irregularities apparent in its composition ;” especially when I add, that the poor girl beforementioned is entirely out of danger ; and that the reception this may meet with, may serve as an encouragement to offer some observations on different subjects, equally deserving of attention.

Boston, January 19, 1796.

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Med. Hist.

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